

Bates Slips Off Hook

By ARGUS
Wycombe Wanderers 2,
Wimbledon 1.

NEVER let Paul Bates out of your sight! The words should be engraved on the heart of every Isthmian League centre-half but England star Roy Law, of Wimbledon, who knows the lesson better than most, was too leg-weary to do much about Bates' restless roamings at Loakes Park on Saturday evening. Result—two perfect opportunist goals.

A tired, jaded looking Dons side—feeling the effects of their championship busting league game with Walthamstow Avenue just 24 hours previously—let Bates off the hook far too much.

He smashed one huge drive against the Wimbledon crossbar a few minutes before half time, missed a simple goal in the penalty area mud, and gave Wycombe a 50th minute lead with the sort of shot that young Mike Kelly, the Dons' goalkeeper, must have nightmares about, a whipped drive on the run which hurtled into the roof of the net.

A CERTAIN DRAW

Five minutes later international inside-left Geoff Hamm tapped an easy equaliser after Wycombe's left flank marking had broken down and with Wanderers repeatedly missing their chances on a very treacherous pitch a draw looked a racing certainty.

But with three minutes to go Bates, lurking innocently on the right wing, cut down the slope, diddled three defenders as he snaked inside and slid Len Worley a beautiful pass. Worley responded with a first class centre and Bates nodded a classical winning goal.

Bates apart, there was little fury about either attack. Dons' tubby right-winger Peter Kenchington let rip some fierce first-half drives to test goalkeeper Ken Brown but "big names" Hamm and Brian Martin were very subdued.

Best of the Dons' forwards was Eddie Reynolds. The Irish giant has improved his ball control out of all recognition since his first visit to Loakes Park. His duel with John Fisher was a comparatively scholarly affair with the vastly improved Wycombe pivot more than holding his own.

Peter James played soundly at left-half and helped Fisher and Dave Thomas to quell the Dons inside trio. Dons shuffled their wings despairingly without finding any aces. John Beck and emergency left-back Barry Darvill defended stubbornly.

Wycombe were also comparatively weak at inside forward, Jack Tomlin and Ivor Ashby running into frequent trouble. But with Wimbledon sagging with fatigue in the second half Wanderers had chances enough to win handsomely and there was plenty of excitement, goalmouth clashes and fouls before Bates gave Dons the mortal blow.